

## What is Fatherhood?

Written by Lisa Schauerhamer, Juvenile Justice Services  
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Lisa Schauerhamer, JJS Community Relations Coordinator, recently posed a question to Frank Bedolla, “what is fatherhood? He responded by saying “someone who is there, responsible, loyal, knows how to discipline, a teacher and a protector.” Bedolla is an employee of Juvenile Justice Services (JJS) and the Volunteer Director of the Utah Chapter of Fathers and Families. He is passionate about boys learning how to become good role models and active fathers.

Lisa first met Bedolla in 2004 through an upper division psychology class that volunteered with JJS. At the conclusion of the semester, Bedolla continued as a volunteer for JJS. In 2005, Bedolla was hired as a counselor at Salt Lake Observation and Assessment where he continues to be employed. Frank works closely with the individuals in the boys’ unit. His primary goal is to educate the boys about the importance of manhood. For those without role models, he hopes to teach them to accept what has been absent and seek out other adult men who are positive role models.

Bedolla is passionate about the importance of fatherhood. He had an opportunity to attend a National Fathers and Families Coalition Conference and was impressed with their focus. He was struck with the thought that most people don’t realize how important fathers are and many youth are raised in a fatherless home. Where possible, it is very important to have two active parents raising a family. Active fathers are a critical link to raising healthy children. Bedolla was so moved by this idea that he became the state representative for the Utah Chapter of Fathers and Families Coalition and teaches in the community classes on fatherhood to both teen and adult fathers. The course is eight weeks and topics include: The Roots of Fathering; Fathering Sons/Fathering Daughters; Managing Anger/Resolving Conflict; Balancing Work and Fathering; The Father I Choose To Be; Behavioral Management; Fathering without Violence or Fear; and Leaving a Legacy. Bedolla has also created a support group for teen fathers dealing with similar issues.

Another exciting program Bedolla was involved in was the Nurturing Fathers Program through Head Start. Through the mentoring process older fathers reached out to younger teen fathers to help them address their concerns and struggles and celebrate their achievements. Bedolla was very impressed by the interactions between the two sets of fathers.

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Bedolla is actively involved in the community to redefine fatherhood. He believes Utah can lead the nation in educating our boys to become the best men, fathers, and role models for future generations.

Bedolla recently organized a summit with the goal to develop a coalition in our community to promote fatherhood in all areas. A number of community leaders participated, including Tim Bridgewater, Judge Valdez, Utah Domestic Violence Council Executive Director Judy Bell, City Prosecutor Sim Gill and moderator University of Utah Assistant Professor Jason Castillo. The questions raised at the summit were on fatherlessness in Utah and President Obama's \$500 million proposal on fatherhood, Healthy Marriage Innovative Fund. During the conference, discussion focused on developing better families, home lives and fathers. There is no magic answer but it is a good direction to go and this summit was a good start. "Fathers matter," Bedolla said. "If we focus on the fatherhood aspects of the family unit, a lot of issues that we face would actually be resolved."